



Governor Phil Scott Announces Creation of Future of Vermont Agriculture Commission



AGRIview



Vermont's Agricultural Future

Agriculture needs to seize the moment.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we need to focus on the future of farming and those who make their living off the land. The last year highlighted the importance of Agriculture in our lives. We saw the gaps in the food system, but we also saw the opportunities from the farm and the field.

On February 19, 2021, Governor Phil Scott issued an executive order establishing the Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture. Our work begins this spring, and we need to issue recommendations to the Governor in November.

First, a little background. This Executive Order has charged the Future of Vermont Agriculture Commission with developing long and short-term strategies and specific action plans with measurable outcomes to ensure that Vermont remains a vibrant agricultural state into the future. All sectors are covered from milk to meat to maple and beyond. The Commission will focus on ensuring the viability and adaptability of sectors, including recommendations for more cross-sector collaboration, increasing production and promotion, reducing barriers to entry, and increasing diversity within the sector, as well as continued progress on environmental issues.

The chore is a heavy lift but our farmers, producers and those working in the food system are ready for the challenge. Over the next few months, we will be asking you for suggestions. What can make dairy more vibrant and viable? How

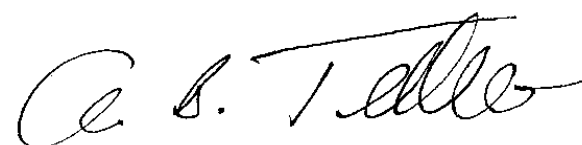
can our cherished maple business grow and find new markets? How can Vermont eliminate the gaps in our meat processing network? How do we support those growing fruits and vegetables for stores, institutions and our neighbors? We also need to look at ways to support those who want to retire and transition their businesses to the next generation. We cannot forget the environment and the challenges of meeting regulations and climate change. Consumers are watching while wanting farmers to succeed.

Agriculture will have some strong partners in this exercise. Joining us on the commission is the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) Secretary Lindsay Kurrle who will

co-chair the commission with me. This is important because it brings a fresh perspective to the Agriculture sector. Throughout the pandemic under Secretary Kurrle's leadership, ACCD has been doing all it can to help businesses survive so they may thrive down the road. Commerce understands the important role that agriculture plays across our economic landscape.

Keep your eye on the meetings of the commission. We will want to hear from you as we develop our recommendations. We want this to be a report we all can be proud of as we try to improve the lives of those making a living off the land.

This is Agriculture's time, and we are ready.



Anson Tebbetts, Secretary, Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

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C O N N E C T

W I T H U S



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This Month's Recipe

BLT Pasta Salad

April is National B.L.T. Month and we thought this twist might make for a quick evening meal one day this spring.

Ingredients

- 10 slices bacon cooked crisp and diced
- 16 oz pasta cooked and cooled bowtie or rotini (or whatever you have on hand)
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 3/4 cup ranch dressing
- 1 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes sliced in half
- 1 cup cheddar cheese shredded
- 1/3 cup red onion diced

- 1 cup romaine lettuce
- fresh parsley for garnish optional

Instructions

1. Whisk together mayonnaise and ranch dressing
2. In a large bowl assemble the pasta, tomatoes, cheese, red onion, lettuce and bacon.
3. Pour the dressing over and toss to combine.
4. Garnish with parsley and serve.



Future of Vermont Agriculture Commission

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long and short-term," said ACCD Secretary Kurrle.

Commission members have

not been appointed yet. Members will represent several sectors including maple, dairy and experts in Vermont's food systems, as well as those with expertise in environmental and land use issues.

The Commission will deliver a report to the Governor in November 2021.

View the Executive Order at:
<https://governor.vermont.gov/content/executive-order-no-03-2>

VERMONT AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEM PLAN 2021 – 2030:

Food Security

Editor's note: This brief is part of the Vermont Agriculture & Food System Plan 2021-2030 submitted to the legislature in January 2021. To read the full plan, please go to <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/document/vermont-agriculture-and-food-system-strategic-plan-2021-2030>

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What's at Stake?

"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." All Vermonters have a right to healthy, affordable food, not only today but in times of crisis, regardless of their life circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the benefit of a thriving agricultural economy in buffering national food supply chain disruptions, particularly for those already struggling to obtain adequate food. In order to reduce climate and pandemic-related risks to our food security, and to protect the most vulnerable, we need to reorient a significant part of our food production to the regional level. Coordinated, statewide action is needed to ensure food security across Vermont, in times of crisis and times of calm, for every Vermonter.

Percent of Vermont Population Experiencing Food Insecurity

Food security rates can change rapidly. A UVM study reported a 33% increase in food insecurity in the COVID-19 pandemic, after years of the rate holding steady. The resulting rate of approximately 1-in-4 Vermonters facing food insecurity was higher than any time during the Great Recession.

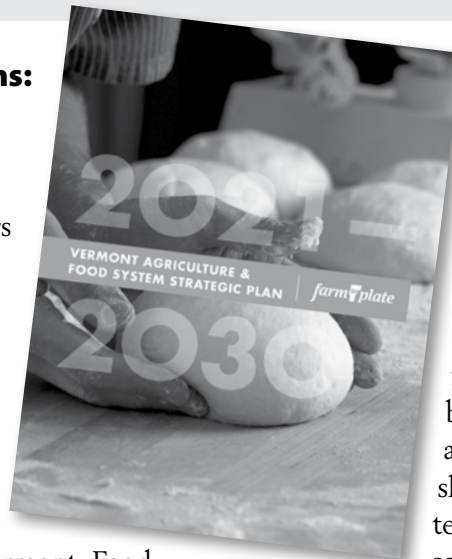
In the 12 months prior to March 2020 – 18%

In March 2020 – 24%

Current Conditions:

Household food insecurity is a result of structural socioeconomic factors often beyond the control of individual households and eliminating it will require a system-level approach to ending poverty and other barriers to healthy food in Vermont. Food insecurity encompasses not only lack of food but the nutritional quality and accessibility of available food. It is one of several important social determinants of physical and mental health, along with housing instability, household energy insecurity, transportation difficulties, and problems accessing affordable healthcare. Vermont's agricultural economy positions us well to take advantage of local and regional food production as a means of mitigating food insecurity in the present and to feed us during future social disruptions related to climate change, disease outbreaks, and other disasters. However, even where a reliable local and regional food supply exists, it is often unaffordable for many Vermonters, even those who are not counted by the USDA as being food insecure.

During the pandemic, rising



need for food assistance, anticipated long-term disruption to food supply chains, and the impact on agricultural and food-related business viability, all illustrate where short and longer-term planning could increase food system resilience. The public food assistance system, which includes programs such as 3SquaresVT, WIC, school meals, and meal programs for older adults, is effective but not adequate to eliminate food insecurity. Tools do exist to help planners and towns with food supply and access planning, but these are newly available, and more training, dissemination, and promotion of food security planning tools are needed. Vermont should ensure that municipal, state, and regional plans address the risk of food supply chain disruptions and prepare for emergencies which may arise.

Bottlenecks & Gaps:

- Political and corporate narratives which ascribe food insecurity to individual responsibility rather than socioeconomic factors have been misleading, and this can lead

to limited solutions.

- Wages, the cost of living, skills in and time for preparing foods, an aging population, and racial, ethnic, and gender inequities are among the socioeconomic structural factors limiting increased food security in Vermont.
- Due in part to federal agricultural policies and subsidies, low-cost, unhealthy, processed foodstuffs are widely available, while nutritious, whole foods are higher-cost and harder to access. This imbalance impacts both consumers and farmers.
- There is no coordinated or comprehensive effort underway to plan for the impacts of climate and pandemic-induced emergencies on Vermont's food supply and shared food security.
- Statewide efforts to increase Vermont farm business viability are not necessarily able to also consider ensuring a diversity of food production for Vermont's dietary needs (see Food Access and Farm Viability brief).

Opportunities:

- The COVID-19 pandemic drew attention to the national and local food supply chain's strengths and weaknesses, including the important role of Vermont's farms. This new understanding, and creative community responses, can guide future plans, policies, and emergency preparedness.
- State, regional, and municipal planning, including emergency and hazard mitigation planning, are potential ways to ensure food access and security.
- Efforts are underway in Vermont and New England to increase regional agricultural self-reliance and disaster resiliency and need

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A Day of Learning: Third Annual Industrial Hemp Conference

By Stephanie Smith, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Northwest Crops and Soils Program, University of Vermont Extension, (UVM) and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM) co-hosted the 3rd Annual Industrial Hemp Conference on Friday February 26, 2021. The virtual conference featured 39 speakers from across the country representing farmers, university researchers, and other hemp business professionals. The sessions focused on many different aspects of the hemp industry including agronomics, pesticide and worker protection standards, the variety of hemp end uses, consumer protection

in the marketplace, and hemp policy and regulatory requirements.

Dr. John McPartland, a Middlebury physician, started the day and discussed his 40 years of research on feral hemp, the genus *Cannabis*-digging deep into taxonomy, and impacts of hybridization. Dr. McPartland shared that in the Midwest, feral hemp populations pose risks to outdoor cultivation due to pollination. A good lesson for Vermont growers and to actively manage land to avoid feral hemp from establishing.

VAAFM presented on pesticide use and the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) in production of hemp. Prior to using pesticides on hemp, be aware of state of Vermont pesticide regulations, US Environmental Protection



Agency and federal WPS requirements. The Hemp Program shared regulations for sampling hemp crops, recordkeeping, and testing, as well as contaminant action limits for hemp crops, concentrates, products and infused products, and state and federal policy alongside representatives from Massachusetts and Maine. Farmer panels and others shared their experiences in various hemp markets

including- production for cannabinoids, grain, fiber and use of the stalk by-product from floral production as biochar.

University research is instrumental in learning about this “new” crop. Representatives shared research into market perceptions and the crop’s potential impact on rural economies. Other speakers shared their insight into best practices for drying and curing hemp,

highlighting the differences between these two processes. Cornell University professor, Gary Bergstrom, and Jennifer Starr spoke on diseases affecting hemp grown in the northeast. Heather Darby, UVM, and Jeanine Davis, North Carolina State University each shared hemp field research trials. University of Kentucky’s Bob Pearce also shared his research into THC and CBD accumulation in hemp.

If you missed the conference, it will be made available through UVM’s eXtension platform, <https://catalog.extension.org/product?catalog=VT-2021Hemp>. For more information on how to access, please contact Susan Brouillette at Susan.Brouillette@uvm.edu.

Food System Plan

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- additional funding support.
- Federal supplemental nutrition programs such as school meals, 3SquaresVT, and WIC, and the (relatively much smaller) charitable food system, are proven assistance to households where money is a major barrier to healthy food, and utilization can be increased through outreach, funding, and normalizing participation.
- Models from other states where all food assistance programs are housed under a single

agency could provide administrative efficiency and more effectively tie food access to local food production.

Recommendations:

- Fund a research project to fully understand household food insecurity in Vermont and how to invest in its elimination. The design and implementation of the research project should engage academics, advocacy groups, and impacted individuals, and include research on geographic spread, root causes, and costs to the health care, educational, and emergency

response systems. Hunger Free Vermont, Vermont Foodbank, and others have begun planning such a study. Estimated cost: \$150,000.

- Make a Vermont food security plan, centered around a thriving food system and inspired by community-based responses to food insecurity and disruptive events. Involve food insecure individuals as well as farmers in the planning, and investigate questions including but not limited to affordable housing, health care, transportation, siting of retail grocery stores, food distribution, and ensuring

the continued production of food in Vermont. Develop an action plan to coordinate investment and implementation, alongside the Vermont Farm to Plate Plan.

- Integrate food security into existing planning systems, with transparency and public involvement. Work to adopt state and regional level policies, procedures, and plans to ensure that the Vermont food supply is sufficient to weather global or national food supply chain disruptions caused by climate change and other disasters.
- Invest in existing solutions for food insecurity

which have been proven effective and assist vulnerable Vermonters. Provide universal breakfast and lunch programs for every Vermont student, and establish local food-chain relationships within each school cafeteria. Increase investment and utilization of public food assistance programs, including efforts to connect these programs with local farmers, and support the charitable food system in its efforts to partner with farms through direct purchasing. (See Food Access and Farm Viability brief, and School Food Procurement brief.)

Creamery Uses NE-DBIC and Working Lands Funds to Create Opportunity from Chaos

By Kathryn Donovan, VT
Agency of Agriculture, Food &
Markets

Early in 2020, before COVID-19 had become a reality for the country, the owners of Parish Hill Creamery in Westminster, Vermont were focused on their small-scale production of artisan, raw milk cheese for high-end markets. It was going well: they were selling everything they made and had been awarded the Slow Food Resistance Award for their work in teaching other cheesemakers traditional methods. They had also placed at the World Cheese Awards and had placed at the American Cheese

Society competition for the fifth consecutive year.

After eight years of running the day-to-day production with a lens to quality, tradition, and sustainability, Rachel Schaal and Peter Dixon were starting to consider hiring cheesemakers for their business and transitioning their own roles to focus largely on teaching, looking forward to continuing to impart their cheesemaking knowledge to the greater community.

But when the pandemic wreaked havoc on distribution routes and wholesale markets, Rachel and Peter were stopped in their tracks. Without many of their foundational

high-end markets, they were faced with the much more immediate question of whether they needed to stop making cheese altogether. Ultimately, they decided to press on, shifting their distribution outlets to more localized markets. But to make those shifts, they needed to adapt their business as well.

Enter the Working Lands Enterprise Board's (WLEB) COVID-19 Response Business Development Grant program, which offered funds for Vermont agriculture businesses to pivot and adapt to COVID-19 impacts on their markets. Parish Hill Creamery was selected as one of two dairy business grant recipients. The WLEB grant covered equipment needs and the Vermont-based, USDA-funded Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center

(NE-DBIC) stepped in to support Parish Hill's marketing-focused work.

Since the height of the pandemic impacts on the food supply chain in the spring, Parish Hill has been busy making the most of their \$21,175 grant, embarking on three investments: the purchase of equipment that they needed to streamline and expand their capacity for cutting and wrapping cheese, including a small walk-in cooler and a vacuum-sealer; updates to their marketing plan and marketing materials, including a website upgrade, professional photography and videography, and brand development; and lastly, a feasibility study and site plan for aging space to accommodate expansion.

In speaking with Rachel several months into their grant, she expressed that

the WLEB and NE-DBIC grant funds had allowed them to stay in business. By utilizing new equipment and upgrades funded through Working Lands they were able to meet local market demand that they would have otherwise been unable to meet. While the equipment enabled them to react quickly to shifts in the market, the NE-DBIC investment in their marketing strategy and expansion feasibility study has longer term impacts, developing a fresh brand appeal and increasing capacity. Both will help them access new markets as the potential for demand grows again.

And in the meantime, with the financial pressure somewhat relieved, they were able to infuse time and energy into their cheese-

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NE-DBIC Value-Added Dairy Processor Marketing and Branding Services Grant to Open

In mid-April, the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center will release a funding opportunity available to established value-added dairy processors designed to help them access professional marketing and branding services for their business. Funds will also cover expenses related to implementing marketing tactics, brand improvements, and overall strategy as it relates to the work completed by the marketing/branding expert(s). These grants will be open to applicants in Vermont and across the Northeast U.S.

Individual grants will range from \$10,000 - \$50,000. A total of \$400,000 is available. Applicants will be required to provide 25% cash and/or in-kind match contribution.

Full opportunity will be released: April 13, 2021

Application Opens: April 27, 2021

Application Closes: June 8, 2021

For more information about this opportunity, please visit: agriculture.vermont.gov/dbic/activities

Questions? Contact Kathryn Donovan, 802-585-4571 or kathryn.donovan@vermont.gov



Rachel Schaal and Peter Dixon of Parish Hill Creamery

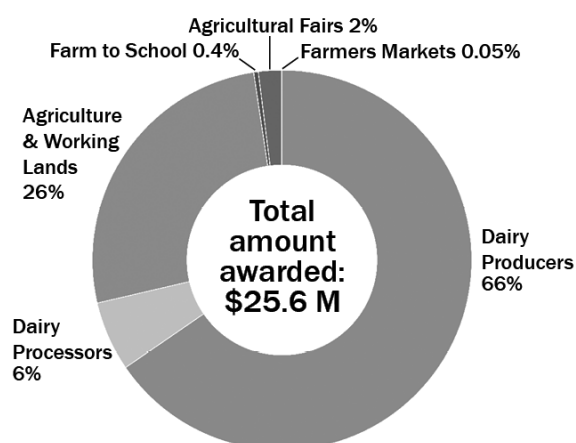
Vermont COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program Impact

By Kristina Sweet,
Gina Clithero and
Ollie Cultrara, VT
Agency of Agriculture,
Food & Markets

Between August and December 2020, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets distributed \$25.6 million in Vermont COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program (VCAAP) grants to agriculture, food, and forestry businesses and organizations. The purpose of the program was to help offset revenue losses and expenses the sector experienced due to market and business disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding for VCAAP was appropriated by the Vermont State Legislature from federal Coronavirus Relief Funds in four bills that determined business eligibility criteria and maximum award amounts.

The program awarded over 1,100 VCAAP grants in just five months thanks to an

Total Awards by Application Type



outstanding effort from dozens of staff at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and partner organizations. Over 85% of VCAAP recipients who completed a follow-up survey reported that their award helped moderately, a lot, or a great deal to stabilize their business. Funding requests far exceeded the money that was available, and 90% of grantee survey respondents reported that they would be likely to apply for a similar grant in the future.

The Vermont State Legislature designated several categories of VCAAP applications with specific amounts of funding. The largest appropriation was for

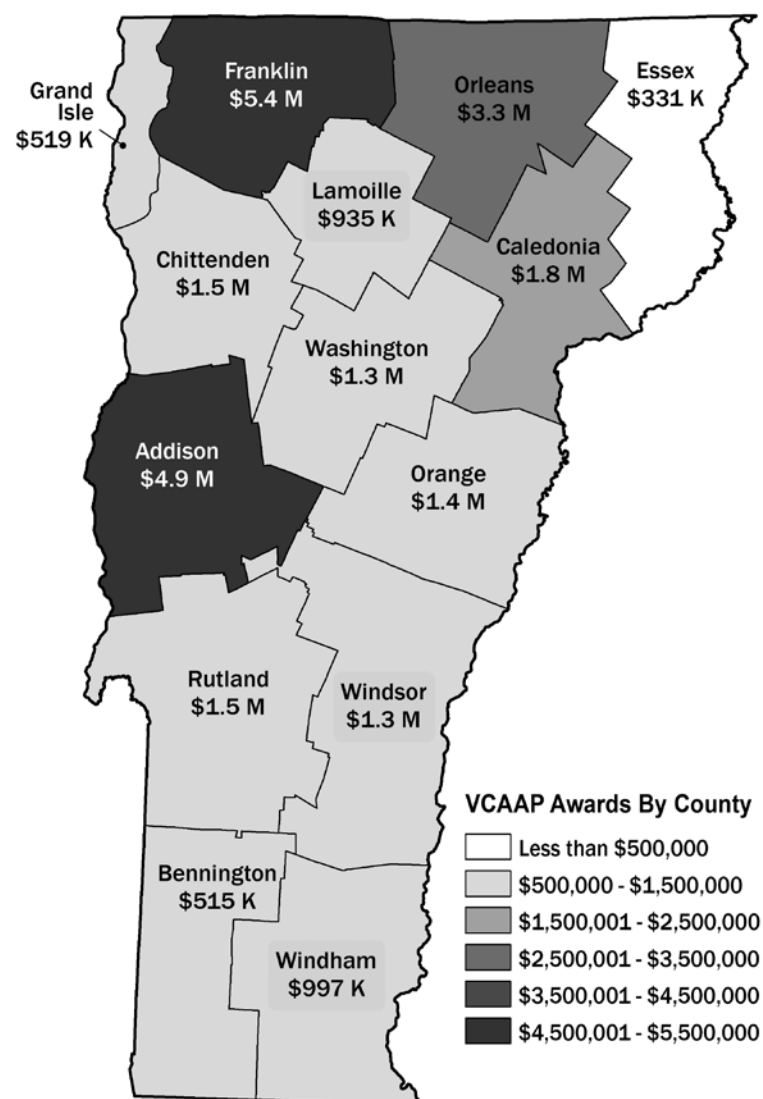
dairy farmers and dairy processors, such as businesses producing yogurt or cheese. In total, \$18.3 million was awarded to 525 dairy businesses. Of that, \$16.8 million was granted to dairy farms with the remaining \$1.5 million going to dairy processors. Dairy

businesses, if qualified, were eligible for two disbursements up to a maximum amount based on their farm size or processing capacity.

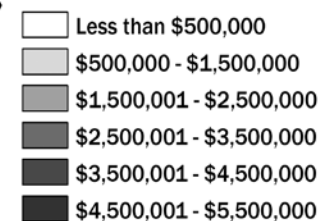
The second largest appropriation was for other Agriculture and Working Lands businesses and organizations, including farmers, meat processors, slaughterhouses, farmers' markets, value-added food product businesses, forest products businesses, and producer associations. Over 300 businesses in this category were awarded a total of \$6.7 million on a first-come, first-served basis. To qualify, Agriculture and Working lands applicants needed to meet eligibility criteria that included demonstrating at least \$10,000 in 2019 revenue. Award amounts were capped based on 2019 revenue.

Smaller allocations were designated for small farmers' markets, schools and child care providers, and agricultural fairs. Farmers' markets with less than \$10,000 in annual sales were eligible to apply for up to \$2,000, and seven farmers' markets were awarded a total of \$12,643

Total Amount Awarded by County



VCAAP Awards By County



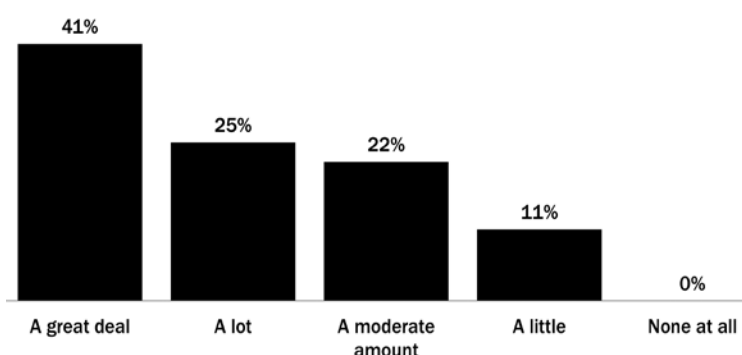
to offset pandemic-related expenses and losses. Schools and child care providers were reimbursed for equipment and supplies necessitated by COVID-19 for farm to school programs. In sum, twenty-two farm to school programs received grants totaling \$100,000. Many of these grants allowed children to safely learn, eat, and play outside during the pandemic. Finally, twelve of the state's agricultural fair and field days organizations received a total of \$500,000 to compensate for income loss, additional expenses, and

event disruption.

A full Vermont COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program Impact Report is available online at agriculture.vermont.gov/document/vcaap-impact-report.

We recognize that many businesses and organizations have ongoing relief needs. While VCAAP applications are now closed, businesses and organizations can learn about federal relief options from the U.S. Small Business Administration at www.sba.gov/coronavirus and from the USDA at www.farmers.gov/coronavirus

How much did receiving a VCAAP grant help to stabilize your business or organization?



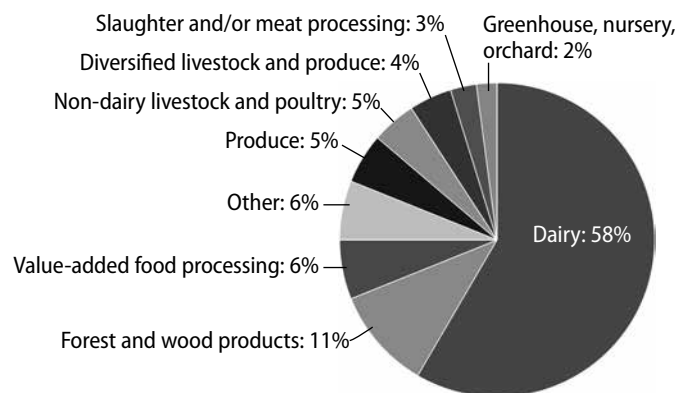
Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program's COVID Response & Recovery Coaching

By Mariah Noth, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in rapid changes for individuals, communities, and our economy. Working lands entrepreneurs have been at the front lines, experiencing dramatic sales swings, loss of markets, extraordinary demand for local foods, and new expectations for upholding health and safety – all while

continuing to carry out essential duties to sustain their communities.

Businesses Served Through COVID Response & Recovery Coaching



The role of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board's Farm & Forest Viability Program is to support the success of Vermont's working lands entrepreneurs, improving business outcomes and overall well-being. Furthering this mission, we launched a new COVID Response & Recovery Coaching program in March 2020, in addition to our longer-term advising and grant programs.

From late March through December 2020, the program supported more than 520 entrepreneurs who steward an estimated 175,734 acres, gross \$312.9M in annual revenues, and provide 2,157 jobs (FTEs). In collaboration with the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, the Viability Program ultimately assisted nearly 400 producers with applying for the Vermont COVID Agricultural Assistance Program grants.

Supported with an initial Working Lands Enterprise Initiative grant and sustained through federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief

Funds allocated by the State Legislature, this program was able to respond to producers' immediate needs. Entrepreneurs received assistance with accessing state and federal relief programs and nearly a third received help with financial management. The program also provided support with pivoting sales models toward direct and online sales, connecting with health and wellbeing resources, and

addressing labor and human resources challenges.

Impacts:

- 524 businesses served
- 400 producers supported with accessing Vermont COVID Agricultural Assistance Program grants
- 82% were assisted in navigating relief programs
- 20% supported with pivoting sales to new markets

For Agricultural Events and Resources Visit:

- The VT Agency of Agriculture Events Calendar: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/calendar>
- UVM Extension Events Calendars: https://www.uvm.edu/extension/extension_event_calendars
- Vermont Farm to Plate Events Calendar: <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/events>
- Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont Events Calendar: <http://nofavt.org/events>
- DigIn Vermont Events Calendar: <https://www.diginvt.com/events/>
- Agricultural Water Quality Regulations: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality/regulations>
- Agency of Ag's Tile Drain Report now available here: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/tile-drainage>
- VAAFM annual report available here: http://agriculture.vermont.gov/about_us/budgets_reports
- Farm First: Confidential help with personal or work-related issues. More info call: 1-877-493-6216 any-time day or night, or visit: www.farmfirst.org
- Vermont AgrAbility: Free service promoting success in agriculture for people with disabilities and their families. More info call 1-800-639-1522, email: info@vcil.org or visit: www.vcil.org.

For more agricultural events visit our Funding Opportunities & Resources for Businesses webpage at: http://agriculture.vermont.gov/producer_partner_resources/funding_opportunities

Client Stories

Iroquois Acres, Bridport

In April 2020, the COVID pandemic brought with it significant, unanticipated



price declines and a quota on milk production for many conventional dairy producers across the country. Iroquois Acres, a fourth-generation dairy in Bridport, was in the extremely challenging position of not being able to cover production costs. Stephanie Pope reached out to the Viability Program for urgent support to access financial resources and develop a plan to keep her family's business going. Business advisor Rose Wilson assisted her in navigating federal relief programs and analyzing finances to determine how to maintain operations in this extremely lean time. With timely guidance, the family was able to make informed decisions about how to allocate resources and stabilized their business.

"The pandemic caused 30 percent of our income to disappear overnight. Working with Rose through the COVID Response program allowed us to build a cash flow and budgeting tool that has helped us stabilize and improve our efficiency. We've adapted this tool for different situations, which has been crucial to making informed business decisions – it's been a game changer for us!" – Stephanie Pope, Iroquois Acres

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PRODUCE SAFETY IMPROVEMENT GRANT SPOTLIGHT:

Champlain Orchards

By Ollie Cultrara, VT
Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

For all of Champlain Orchard's 23 years of operation, owner Bill Suhr of Shoreham, Vermont says he is "proud of the fact that we've been able to keep current and competitive" in local and regional markets by making investments in food safety and quality.

Champlain Orchards received a Vermont Produce Safety Improvement Grant of \$5,000 in April 2019 to purchase automated equipment for monitoring and dispensing sanitizer chemicals in their apple packing line wash tank.

According to the Produce Safety Alliance, using properly labeled sanitizers in wash water is a best practice to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Sanitizers help prevent any human pathogens that may be present from spreading through water in postharvest systems like dump tanks and flumes.

The Vermont Produce Program's Gina Clithero and Ollie Cultrara checked in with Bill Suhr, Simon Wurst, and Teresa Petschl of Champlain Orchards to hear about how the new equipment has impacted the orchard's apple packing process, quality assurance, and market access.

How did Champlain Orchards get started?

Bill: The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Vermont Land

Trust, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture helped conserve the Larabee Point Orchard, now Champlain Orchards, in 1998. Since then, we have acquired three other fruit farms that have also been conserved. Our products are fresh apples, peaches, nectarines, cherries, and plums, as well as apple pies, apple butter, cider syrup, hard cider, sweet cider, and fresh apple slices. In 1998, we were delivering apples in a station wagon, and now there are 60 men from Jamaica that help us seasonally and 40 full-time staff.

How does produce safety fit into your farm's mission or vision?

Bill: Champlain Orchards has always had a focus on unusual fruit that are ecologically grown. All of that is for naught if we are not compliant from a food safety standpoint. Millennials, parents of young children, older folks are ever more cognizant of where their food is coming from and food safety. Certainly COVID-19 has heightened the discerning customers and has benefitted us in people having confidence in the local supply that they have been sourcing.

Can you describe your Produce Safety Improvement Grant project?

Simon: With the grant



Champlain Orchards

its job.

Teresa: We did our best doing everything manually, but this water sanitation system has really changed the game for us. This equipment makes it infinitely easier to monitor and safer for us.

How did this grant affect your farm?

Bill: Champlain Orchards has aspired to stay current and ahead of food safety compliance. Requirements have changed a lot over the 23 years we've been growing the business, and it is challenging for small farms to remain compliant. Small farms have the same requirements and responsibilities as large farms to remain compliant. In the long run, it's a very important investment for us to be making. There is confidence in many small farms and their ability to produce safe food. Consumers see recalls on some large producers and realize that they rarely see recalls on small farms.

The grant project is helping us put out a fresh product that we can be confident about, and has given us confidence to reach out to more regional markets in Boston and New York and be able to compete with larger suppliers from the West Coast. We have a marketing angle on our unusual fruit, and now we're on a level field in terms

of food safety compliance, and we're able to respond quickly when requests are made.

What would you like to see for the future of the Vermont produce industry?

Bill: We have a small population in this state, so we do need to look to outside markets. We have good access to markets being on the east coast. I think we've done an excellent job as growers and producers in the state at maintaining a very high level of quality. If I fast-forwarded ten years from now, I'd like to see Vermont producers keep carving out their niche. We won't be growing the largest volume, least expensive cantaloupes, but we might be growing or producing more niche items. I think maintaining high quality standards including food safety confidence is how we strengthen our potential to be successful. With climate warming, we are vulnerable to losing certain crops that are ideal to northern growing regions right now, but we also have an opportunity to see what crops from southern regions will be more optimal for us to be growing. We need to be aware of how to adapt to remain relevant.

To learn more about the Produce Safety Improvement Grant program and the Vermont Produce Program, visit agriculture.vermont.gov/produceprogram, email AGR.FSMA@vermont.gov or call (802) 461-5128.

Funding for Farm Agronomic Practices

By Nina Gage, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

The Agency's Farm Agronomic Practices (FAP) Program invests state funds in soil-based agronomic practices to improve soil quality, increase crop production, and reduce erosion and surface runoff from agricultural fields. Apply now for funding towards spring conservation practices, such as manure injection, conservation tillage, and rotating cropland into hay. Limited funding is available!

The payment rates vary by practice type. There is a maximum of \$8,000 available per farm operation from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. This funding cap per farm will reset for from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. Applications are due June 15 for rotational grazing, August 1 for cover cropping, and at least 30 days prior to implementation for all other practices.

Farm operations that meet the threshold for the Required Agricultural Practices are eligible to apply; operations must be in good standing (do not owe the any funds and are not in final order in enforcement) with water quality regulations in order to receive financial assistance.

The Agency advises farmers to plan ahead as best as possible for implementation of agronomic practices, especially when seeking financial assistance. Any applications that request funding for a specific practice are only eligible for funding as detailed on their application and grant agreement.

Additional financial assistance for conservation practices are available through the federal USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Any applicant seeking assistance through FAP will be ineligible

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Sign Up for Help Writing a Nutrient Management Plan

By Sonia Howlett, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

A Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) is not just a requirement for Vermont farmers - it is also a valuable tool! An NMP is a personalized budget of on-farm nutrients that helps farmers: (1) Plan manure and other nutrient applications to meet yield goals; (2) Save money on unneeded fertilizers; (3) Maintain or improve soil health; and (4) Protect water and air quality.

For Vermont farmers, creating and managing an NMP can be very expensive, very complicated, or both. That's why, in association with USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) developed a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (VACD-RCPP) to provide start-to-finish support for farm operators to take UVM Extension NMP classes.

Under Vermont's Required Agricultural Practices, all farms with 50+ mature dairy cows, 75+ cattle, or 50+ acres of annual cropland need to be certified with the Agency of Agriculture and are required to develop and follow a Nutrient Management Plan. Emily Finnegan, Land Treatment Planner and Nutrient Management Specialist at the Orleans District, firmly believes that taking the UVM Extension class with the support of VACD-RCPP "is the best and most inexpensive way ... for small farmers to get a nutrient management plan."

The UVM Extension NMP class not only helps farmers to write and update their own Nutrient Management Plan but it also teaches them to decode information about nutrients on their farm, interpret soil tests, and understand nutrient recommendations. These classes are offered all around the state and are taught by Heather Darby or Kirsten Workman. The

instructors are registered NRCS Technical Service Providers (TSPs), so the NMPs that farmers write during the class can be NRCS certified to meet EQIP requirements.

The VACD-RCPP offers farmers writing a new nutrient management plan free tuition to the UVM Extension class and provides them with the other services they need to prepare for the class and to use their knowledge over the following years. These services include Land Treatment Plan development, soil sampling and manure sampling, all for free. The Program also gives participants writing a new nutrient management plan a free one-year license to GoCrop™, UVM's user-friendly nutrient management software, and help farm participants update their Nutrient Management Plans for at least the next three years.

Since 2015, conservation districts have worked with over 150 farmers, mostly from small dairy and beef operations, to write and update their NMPs. The reviews have been generally positive. "The class was informal enough to make it easy to learn," according to Earl Fournier, a long-time organic farmer in Swanton who took the class in January 2019. Kody Baker, also from Swanton, admitted that he was skeptical when he signed up for the 2018 class, but he quickly found it was worth his time. "I think everyone should take it," he said.

If you are interested in this year's round of VACD-RCPP funding, contact at Emily Finnegan at 802-624-7022 or emily.finnegan@vt.nacdnet.net for more information and to sign up. The sign-up deadline is July 31st.

This program is supported by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets. For more information on Nutrient Management Planning, including information on other ways of writing and funding an NMP, visit <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/nmp>.



Reduced tillage planting systems reduce soil disturbance, improve organic matter, and help reduce nutrient runoff from agricultural fields.

New Report Reflects Phosphorus Reduction Progress as a Result of Conservation Implementation by Vermont Farmers

By Amy Overstreet,
Vermont Natural
Resource Conservation
Service

Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership

The Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership (VAWQP) released its 2020 annual report highlighting the impacts of state and federal investments toward protecting and improving water quality. The VAWQP report shares conservation practice implementation data which indicates a high level of commitment from Vermont farmers in land stewardship.

For example, in 2020, conservation efforts by farmers helped reduce erosion, improve soil health, and protect water quality. Over 28% of the annual cropland in Vermont was cover cropped (26,748 acres) and conservation tillage was implemented on 15% of annual cropland (14,305 acres). Conservation tillage means that 30 percent or more of the soil surface is covered with crop residue, after planting, to reduce soil erosion by water.

"The most recent conservation data for progress on farms throughout the state is very encouraging when you consider the fact that agriculture contributed 96 percent of total reported phosphorus reductions for Vermont, across all land use sectors," said VAWQP coordinator Alli Lewis. These meaningful gains in

water quality improvement on farms were reflected in the recent Clean Water Initiative Performance (CWIP) report, published by the VT Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

The CWIP report summarizes how Vermont's \$194 million investment in water quality over the past five years is paying off by improving water quality in Vermont's rivers, lakes, and wetlands. This report shares that thirteen percent of the Lake Champlain Basin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) required phosphorus reductions have already been met through clean water programs. Estimated phosphorus load reduction from the agricultural sector in 2020 was estimated at 27.1 metric tons, which includes results of farmers participating in USDA Farm Bill programs, as well as technical assistance and regulatory program results such as the VT Agency of Ag, Food, and Markets production area compliance.

The VAWQP reports that in 2020, \$28.2 million was invested by state and federal entities to implement agricultural water quality projects. State and federal assistance helped farmers install practices like crop rotations, manure injection, reduced tillage and cover

crops, and riparian forested and grass buffers. In addition to conservation

implemented on farms throughout Vermont, 200 acres of wetlands were protected through easements on private lands. Wetlands improve water quality by filtering sediments, nutrients, and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity, and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

The 2020 conservation data also illustrates that farmers are accelerating their independent adoption of conservation practices that benefit water quality and soil health. It is estimated that farmers invested \$5.8 million of their own dollars, apart from state or federal assistance, to install conservation practices.

"The Partnership is proud of the work that Vermont citizens and organizations have done to protect water quality and we applaud the farmers of Vermont for doing their part to protect and improve natural resources, especially in these challenging times," said Vicky Drew, State Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The VAWQP is dedicated to collaborating with and supporting farmers in their efforts to improve water quality and seeks to

accelerate improved water quality by collaborating to provide outreach, education, technical and financial assistance directly to farmers with respect for each partner's vision, role and capacity. The Partnership recognizes that there is much work left to be done and looks forward to continuing to work with farmers and the broader Vermont community to preserve our lakes and waterbodies for future generations of recreation and aquatic habitat.

To learn more about the VAWQP and review their five-year strategic plan,

visit their website at www.vtagcleanwater.org and view the cumulative impact of their efforts in their 2020 annual report here.

The Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership (VAWQP) is dedicated to collaborating with and supporting farmers in their efforts to improve water quality. The Partnership seeks to accelerate improved water quality by collaborating to provide outreach, education, technical and financial assistance directly to farmers with respect for each partner's vision, role, and capacity.

Reminder for Farmers and Custom Applicators: Spring Manure Spreading Restrictions

While the winter manure spreading ban formally ends on April 1 of each year, please remember that there are additional requirements laid out in the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs).

For example, application of manure to field areas subject to frequent flooding is prohibited from October 16 - April 14, which extends beyond the winter manure spreading ban dates of December 15 - April 1. In addition, application of manure to saturated, snow-covered, or frozen ground, or on top of bedrock, is prohibited at any time of year. These requirements should make common sense - you are restricted from spreading manure where, due to weather conditions, soil conditions, or other limitations, application of manure to land would pose a significant potential of runoff to waters of the State.

If you have questions relating to manure spreading restrictions, please call the Agency of Agriculture at 802-828-2431 to learn more.

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale:**BEES AND QUEENS****McFarline Apiaries**
Untreated bee breeding

VT 5 frame Nucs and deep singles
\$200-\$300, Available May-June
MCF Queens \$30: June to end of July
tmcfarline2@yahoo.com
www.mcfarlineapiaries.com
802-537-3294
Call or email now for details

**Cattle**

2 Registered Guernsey cows:
Certified A2A2, milking
75- 80lbs, both sired by
Welcome JT – \$1200 each.
1 registered Guernsey bred
heifer due late August A2A2
certified, sired by Latimer;
dam is EX90 \$1500. 802-
222-4047.

22 Jersey cows 2 bred heifers.
4 fresh Jan, 2 Feb, 3 due Mar,
4 Apr, 1 May, 2 June. Can be
reg. Feed grain hay pasture.
802-775-3846

3 breeding age bulls- one
Hereford, 2 angus for
breeding or beef. Asking
\$850 each or will consider
trading for Hereford heifers.
802-586-2857

Angus Bulls for sale good
genetics, calving ease bulls.
Please call 802 533 9804.
Greensboro, VT 05841

Retirement sale: 26 crossbred
organic cows, 4 are registered
Jersey, rest are Jersey,
Shorthorn, Ayrshire and
Holstein mix. AI bred to
Jersey or Swedish Red to
calve in spring and summer.
On November 10 still
producing 45 lbs. on pasture
and 10 lbs grain with 4.4%
BF 3.3%P. BTSCC 150.
\$45,000 for this very gentle
group. Also available 8 well-
grown crossbred heifers due
in March \$10,000 (802)
623-6584

High quality Organic
Registered Holstein,

Springing and bred heifers
available. Spring Brook Farm
802-673-9061 / 673-3810

Equipment

NDE sawdust/shavings
spreader. Can be mounted on
3-point hitch or skid steer.
Benson. Pictures on request.
Best offer. 770-8060.

John Deere 440B Log Skidder
for sale. \$10,000 Call Henry
802-276-3096

Riley stationary hoof trimming
chute. Purchased new 2012.
Lightly used and excel-
lent shape. \$4,500 OBO.
2012 Doda 780 separator
with new screens for sale;
excellent shape, used very
little: \$20,000 OBO Bulk
milk tanks for sale: (2) One
is 4,000 gallon Boumatic
Dairy Kool, excellent con-
dition-\$24,000 OBO. The
other is 1,500-gallon DEC,
also excellent condition:
\$8000. Double 10 Boumatic
parlor for sale: reel, front
exit with ATO and meters;
auto ID and sort gate; excel-
lent shape: \$30,000 OBO.
Call 802-533-2984

JD 350 Dozer. New treads,
many new undercarriage
parts. Winch. Runs well.
\$15,000. Thistle Hill Farm
info@ThistleHillFarm.com or
802-457-9349

3 point hitch fertilizer
spreader 500# works well
350.00. 802 384 3553 and
wallysdomesticzoo@gmail.
com

25,000 Winco PTO Generator
on wheels. New Holland
518, 519 Manure spreader.
254 white Harrows 10 ft
good shape. 3 Furrow plows
– Sweden. 2 Furrow plows.
11-ton Brock Grain bin. 30
ft Hay elevator – red. 802-
624-0143/802-895-4683

IH 843 Combine Cornhead; IH
7ft windrow head for 881
Gehl 350 spreader; 5 ton
and 25-ton grain bins; Case
580 backhoe for parts; Case
850 drive sprockets; 85,000
BTU wood coal furnace. Call
802-770-0959

Equine

Icelandic Walking horse cross.
He is 14 hh 2 years old
gelded and UTD on shots
trims and worming and cog-
gins and is an easy keeper. He
is a beautiful yellow dun with
striping. He will be sturdy and
medium sized. He can trot
and is also gaited. He needs
knowledgeable home and
trainer. He is not spooky and
very friendly and polite. \$900
B.O. 802-384-3553 or wallys-
domesticzoo@gmail.com

Farm & Farmland

For Lease: 10 acres of organic
meadow in Brandon,
currently in alfalfa.
Producing roughly 12-15
tons per year in dry hay.
Three-year lease available,
price negotiable, but
approximately \$600/yr
802-247-8459

Private Horse Farm. 17 +
acres. Covered small arena.
Large sand ring. Insulated
stable with 3 oversize stalls,
attached paddocks, feed/
tack room, hay storage,
grass pastures with board
fencing. Vermont country
open concept farmhouse. 3
bedrooms, office, sunroom.
Solar, cell phone reception,
internet. Workshop, chicken
house, orchard, stream
trails, woods, views. Close to
Dartmouth College and DH
Medical Center. Equipment
and supplies extra. \$549,999.
Call 802-785-4410.

General

Shelburne/ 5-gallon pails
with handles. \$.75 each.

Negotiable for volume
purchase. 802-999-4644.

Boumatic pipeline: \$2500
+/-230ft / 2inch / 46 Stalls
stainless steel milk line
including vacuum line,
wash sink, 3 units, control
box, and receiver jar is
\$2500. \$4000 with vacuum
pump. Call (802) 446-2791
Wallingford. Ask for Jerry.

Hay, Feed & Forage

Good quality certified
organic Haylage stored in
Ag Bags and large round
bales 1st,2nd, and 3rd cut.
Delivery available. 802-988-
2959 or 802-274-2832

Quality Canadian hay for sale,
big/small squares wrapped,
or unwrapped, round bales
wrapped or unwrapped,
1st, 2nd, 3rd cuts available.
Switch grass and straw
available, call Richard at
802-323-3275

2019 1st cut Timothy and
clover hay \$ 5.00 a bale plus
delivery fee. Call 603-256-
8422

1000 tons corn silage,
processed in Colchester.
50 @ ton 802-272-3478
or 802-223-1370 or email
sethgardner@hotmail.com

Excellent quality first cut
wrapped round bales;
baleage. Shelburne VT
Call Andy 802-598-6060.
Analysis available upon
request.

2019 1st Cut 4X4 Wrapped
Round Bales for Sale \$40/
Bale, 2019 2nd Cut 4x4
Wrapped Round Bales
for Sale \$45/Bale, South
Pomfret, call Tom at 802-
457-5834

Organic haylage 12% protein
\$45 per ton, 15% protein
\$55 per ton. 802-537-2435

4x4 round balage mixed grains
cut late June. \$30 802-325-
3707

1st cut 4x5 round bales. Don
Pettis, 802-265-4566.

1st, 2nd & 3rd cut haylage and
corn silage for sale at the
bunk. Peter Gebbie, 802-
533-2984, leave a message.

June 15th cut mixed Hay,
great quality, Will Load, 4'
X 4' Round Bales, \$40/bale,
quantity discount/cash prices
available. Westford, 802-355-
2930

Certified Organic First Cut
Wrapped Round Bales for
sale. Clover, Timothy and
mixed grasses. Test samples
and delivery available. Call
Matt 802-558-3879.

Vetch & rye seeds for sale,
mixed in 50 lb. bags, \$1/lb.
certified by Vermont Organic
Farmers. Thornhill Farm, 198
Taylor Road, Greensboro
Bend, VT 05842, todd@
thornhillfarmvermont.com,
802-441-3176

ADDISON COUNTY

1st cut 4x5 round bales never
wet. Good horse & cow hay.
802-948-2627 or 802-558-
0166

Certified organic, small square
bales always stacked and
stored under cover, 35-40lbs/
bale. \$4/bale, discounts
available for large quantities.
802-989-0781 for inquiries.

Hay for Sale in Addison, VT.
Large square bales and
small squares. \$50-60 for
Large, \$3.50-4.50 for Small.
Delivery Available. Call Jack
802-989-8968

Hay for sale. \$3.25 bale.
802-377-5455

73 1st cut 5ft diameter round
bales. \$30-\$35 Orwell
802-948-2211

Straw for sale - \$7/bale for
50 or more. \$8/bale for less
than 50, \$6/bale for all in
the barn, approx. 350. from
our winter rye harvest in
August. certified organic.
Thornhill Farm, Greensboro
Bend, 05842, todd@
thornhillfarmvermont.com,
802-441-3176

Hay for Sale, Cows have been
sold. 750 Lb 4X5 round
bales stored inside or tube
wrapped.

Bedding/Mulch \$35 Heifer/
Beef \$40 Dairy \$55 I will
load your truck. In Whiting
Call 802-623-6584

CLASSIFIEDS

BENNINGTON COUNTY

Corn Silage 1000 ton plus.
Haylage 500 ton plus. Round bales 4x4. Square bales small. 802-394-2976

CALEDONIA COUNTY

Square baled hay- Top quality, VOF certified organic, generous sized. 1st cut \$4.50/bale, 2nd cut \$5.50/bale at the barn in Barnet. 802-592-3088

CHITTENDEN COUNTY

Round bales for horses. Clean first cut timothy mixed grass, quality net wrapped 4' X 5' bales. Never wet. \$45. each. 802- 879-0391 Westford.

15 large 5x5 round bales mixed grass w/some timothy + clover 800+lbs \$50 ea. 899-4126.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Good Quality Hay 1c & 2c from western US & Canada. Alfalfa orchard & orchard sweet grass 18 to 20% plus protein large bales & organic by trailer loads. Large or small square bales of straw whole or processed at farm we load on direct delivery by trailer load. Mountain View Dairy Farm 802-849-6266

LAMOILLE COUNTY

Organic baled straw. \$5.50/bale. Certified organic. Valley Dream Farm, Cambridge, Vt. 802-644-6598 or valleydream@myfairpoint.net.

ORANGE COUNTY

2019 first cut square hay bales for sale. \$4.00 per bale. Delivery available. Bonnie Kennedy, Chelsea, VT. 802-685-2292.



Approximately 375 ton of high-quality grass and clover first and second cut, cut extremely early in 2018. First finished May 22, second finished July 2nd. Tests high in energy and protein. 45% harvested "hay in a day" \$50 per ton. Chris 802-522-9485

ORLEANS COUNTY

Pure alfalfa for sale and also 1st, 2nd and 3rd cut big/small squares, round bales, wrapped or unwrapped, straw and switch grass. Call Richard at 802-323-3275.

Organic Certified Silage for Sale: We will deliver from our farm or you can come and pick up. Call for prices and delivery charge. 1-802-744-2444 or 802-274-4934 or 802-744-6553.

RUTLAND COUNTY

Good quality 1st and 2nd round bales available, wrapped and dried. Please call 802-446-2435.

WINDHAM COUNTY

2020 4X4 wrapped baleage. June cut. Certified organic, never wet. 802-254-6982

1st cut hay. Good horse hay. \$4.50 bale 802-254-5069

WINDSOR COUNTY

Hay for sale-400 square bales, Reading, Windsor County Vt. \$3.50 per bale at the barn. Call 802-484-7240

Rolling Meadows Farm: square bales in the field or barn \$4.00. Delivery can be arranged at \$5.50. Very nice hay from fertilized fields in the South Woodstock and

Reading area. Call 802-484-5540 or goodfarmvt@gmail.com. Ask for David.

4x5 dry round bales \$45.00 delivery available. 802-457-1376

1st. cut dry round bales for sale. Never been rained on, stored under cover. \$50. @ 1st. cut haylage bales for sale. \$45. Rte. 5 Weathersfield Bow 802 -546-4340.

Dry Round Horse Hay, \$50/ Bale. 200 Bales left. Call 802-356-5030.

Sheep

Sheep Feeders - DS Livestock: 8' long, 4' long and two hexagonal. 20 years old - all steel frames. Cost new without shipping \$1,420. Package price \$475. bearmountainfarmVT@gmail.com (802)-394-7852

A pure bred (w/papers) Romney Ram 3 years old, 1 pure bred (w/papers) Shetland ram for sale. 4 icelandic/romney ewes for sale various ages/colors (certified organic) 422 4704 leave message.

Buying Lambs- 40 lb and up & 1.75/ lb live weight. Call 802-674-2417. Pick up available

Wanted

Dairy Grazing Apprentice, currently on the Corse Farm, graduating in September 2021 looking for placement on a farm that has at least a potential organic market in the future. Ideally 50 to 80 cows with adequate grazing land and a farmer, without a successor, interested in a gradual transition to a new farmer. MacKenzie Wallace mackenzierwallace2@gmail.com or Home Number 802-368-2230 or Cell Number 603-289-4790 between 12:30 -1:30 PM or 6:30 -8 PM

F350 or 450 flatbed dump. Dutch belt heifer calf and black white face bull calf. 603-336-0017

Looking for several 4 spoked 4 ft. diameter pin wheels for an old Farmhand rake. The 90-degree rod hole holding the pin wheel on is 21/4 inches in diameter. Call 802-457-2218

4-6 Galvanized stock tanks. 10 barrel or so in size. Don't need to hold water just needs to hold dirt. Little bit of rust is ok but not a lot. Willing to pay some based on condition. Call Troy at 802-356-9082.

Agency Holds Annual Vermont Dairy Update Virtually

The Vermont Dairy Update, which is typically held at the Farm Show, was held virtually on February 19, 2021. This update provided a review of the Vermont Dairy Industry in 2020. It included impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and the Vermont legislature's response to it. We were pleased to be joined by Congressman Peter Welch who provided insight into activities occurring in Washington DC.

- On the agenda:
- An update on 2020 Dairy Industry Data
 - Review of Vermont COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program Dairy Grants



- Washington Update from Congressman Peter Welch, Tom Berry from Senator Leahy's office and Erica Campbell from Senator Sanders' Staff
- Dairy Business Innovation Center

You can view the presentation and dairy data summary report here: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/agency-agriculture-food-markets-news/agency-holds-annual-vermont-dairy-update-virtually>

Parish Hill Creamery

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making and, as Rachel said, they were able to "continue to turn milk into something sublime, making some of the finest cheese since starting [their] business."

While the outlook remains a bit hazy, they feel more prepared to weather unex-

pected storms. Rachel said, "These funds helped us stay in business and allowed us to look really hard at what's important to us. We didn't feel like we had to give up and feel very valued by the state and our community."

Questions? Contact Kathryn Donovan, kathryn.donovan@vermont.gov, 802-585-4571.

COVID-19 Impacts on Vermont Farms and Food Businesses

Pivots, Needs and Opportunities for the Future

By Meredith Niles, University of Vermont

The COVID-19 Impacts on Vermont Farms and Food Businesses survey was conducted in August-September 2020, led by University of Vermont researchers in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. The experiences of 223 farm and food businesses during COVID-19 gathered through that survey has been compiled into a report that was forwarded to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

The report clearly identified the challenges faced by Vermont's farm and food businesses during COVID-19, with the majority facing economic and market impacts. Key findings include:

- Primary financial impacts included a loss of sales, which were experienced across all business types.
- 2/3 of respondents made significant or moderate changes to their business

as a result of COVID-19.

- The majority of respondents that implemented new product, market or distribution changes intended to continue these changes for 1-2 years.
- 53% of businesses had changes they wanted to make but couldn't primarily because of financial resources, inadequate equipment/infrastructure or personal challenges.
- While the majority of respondents did not apply to COVID-19 programs or grants, those that did, were significantly more likely to agree they had the financial resources needed to make business changes.

However, the report also identified opportunities to transition Vermont's farm and food businesses post-COVID-19, and clearly highlights the helpful strategies to make this possible. Key findings include:

- The greatest increase in markets was among website/e-commerce, and all respondents that made these shifts intended to keep them for the future.
- 60% of respondents that



implemented changes saw opportunity for these changes in the future.

- The most helpful perceived strategies for COVID-19 recovery

included additional financial assistance, market assistance for online/e-commerce shifts, and help applying for programs.

- Providing mental health resources in combination with technical assistance may enable greater access to these services that people may not ask for (but could benefit from).

To download the entire report, please go to ScholarWorks @ UVM <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/calsfac/98/>

Open Farm Week Registration Opens This Month

Dates are August 8 - 15, 2021

By Alissa Matthews, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

We have begun planning for Vermont's 7th annual Open Farm Week for August 2021. Open Farm Week creates an opportunity for folks to visit farms and connect with Vermont's working landscape. Last year, Open Farm Week focused on events appropriate for the current pandemic-related guidelines: self-guided tours, picnics, farm trails, online events, workshops, virtual guided tastings, social media participation, any many other creative ideas. This year, providing



this connection feels more important than ever.

Open Farm Week is a great way to engage with customers and your community. Remember, you can choose any day during the week to host an event or have events on multiple days. Attendees are looking for activities, farmer interaction, and unique events, in addition to any regularly scheduled programming or generally being open to the public. Feel free to think outside of the box.

Questions? Please let us know—we can help you find the right fit for your farm. Our Open Farm Week team is available to provide resources & technical assistance to a limited number of farms that would like support developing ideas and preparing for visitors. There is no additional charge for this technical assistance, but space is limited, and you do need to apply for it.

Registration for farm participation will begin April 15th! Sign-up for technical assistance and find timeline details and additional event information at www.diginvt.com/blog/openfarmweekforfarmers/.

Farm Agronomic Practices

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for financial assistance if the applicant is receiving financial compensation for the same practice under another state or federal agreement.

For more information

on the FAP program, the payment rates for each practice type, and to apply online, go to <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/fap>.

If you have specific questions about practice eligibility, or how the FAP program works, you can contact Sonia Howlett at 802-522-4655.

Produce Safety Bite: Training

On-farm food safety tips for fruit and vegetable growers

By Ollie Cultrara, VT
Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Produce safety is about protecting our fruits and vegetables from becoming contaminated with harmful pathogens that can cause serious illness. Training is the foundation of your farm's produce safety culture. Anyone on the farm who handles produce should have basic food safety training at least once a year—including seasonal workers, family members, or volunteers who interact with produce.

- 1. Handwashing habits are key.** Train everyone to wash their hands thoroughly (i.e., with soap and water, scrubbing for 20 seconds) before harvesting or handling produce, after using the toilet, and when returning to working with produce after breaks or other tasks.
- 2. Empower your crew.**



Teach your team how to spot things that could contaminate produce, like animal feces or dirty harvest knives, and explain how to address issues that arise. Set clear expectations for cleaning containers and equipment, scouting for animal damage and feces, and not harvesting produce that could be contaminated. Let returning employees know you rely on them to set a good example for

new crew members.

- 3. Make it stick.** Use training materials your team can understand and apply, like videos, visuals, or information in your employees' first language. Looking for training materials? Contact the Vermont Produce Program (see below). Reward positive behaviors like consistent handwashing.

And demonstrate your own commitment to produce safety through your actions by following your farm's policies and taking possible contamination issues seriously.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR) includes specific requirements for personnel

training. Whether or not your farm is subject to the PSR, the Vermont Produce Program can help you take the next step in building food safety culture on your farm. Get in touch with our team at AGR.FSMA@vermont.gov, (802) 461-5128, or agriculture.vermont.gov/produceprogram.

Client Stories

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von Trapp Farmstead, Waitsfield

Like many artisan creameries in Vermont, when the pandemic hit, the family-owned von Trapp Farmstead in Waitsfield experienced dramatic losses overnight. When sales to their distributors suddenly dropped by 50%, Molly Semler and Sebastian von Trapp sought business coaching assistance to pivot and navigate the launch of a new farm store, yogurt enterprise, and mail order program that would provide food directly to their community.

Molly and Sebastian worked with business advisor Rose Wilson to develop a sales strategy and analyze their new costs to ensure this venture would support the quality-of-life goals laid out in their business plan. With the store

opening in November 2020, the team is using data to inform their strategy, meet community needs, and build a more resilient business going forward.

"When the pandemic hit, our markets disappeared, and sales plummeted. As we rapidly launched new branches of our business, we needed help getting organized to make sure these efforts would support our business' viability, not just cover operating costs. Rose has been an amazing help with analyzing our costs and

establishing targets for sales needed to make sure the farm store can sustain itself and support our long-term goals." – Molly Semler, von Trapp Farmstead

The Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program provides business planning, technical assistance, and ownership transfer planning to farm, food and forest products businesses. For more information about the Viability Program, please visit www.vhcb.org/viability.

MFO Annual Report and Operating Fee Reminder

Permitted MFOs must submit an annual report and operating fee of \$1,500 to the VAAFM by April 30 of each year. A fillable PDF of the annual report form, and additional forms and information can be found at <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/mfo>.

Checks of \$1,500.00 should be made payable to Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets and can be submitted to:

Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
Attn Jeff Cook
116 State St., Montpelier, VT 05620



Sebastian von Trapp and Molly Semler

New Grants Calendar Available

The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets is pleased to be able to help you more easily identify upcoming grant opportunities. Please go to <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/calendar> for more information.

2021 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Programs Open Year-Round

Pasture And Surface Water Fencing (PSWF) Program
Technical and financial assistance for pasture management and livestock exclusion from surface water on Vermont farms
Kaitlin Hayes
Kaitlin.Hayes@vermont.gov
(802) 622-4112

Grassed Waterway and Filter Strip (GWFS) Program
Technical and financial assistance for implementing buffers and seeding down critical areas on Vermont farms
Sonia Howlett
Sonia.Howlett@vermont.gov
(802) 522-4655

Farmstead Best Management Practices (BMP) Program
Technical and financial assistance for engineered conservation practices on Vermont farms.
Jenn LaValley
Jenn.LaValley@vermont.gov
(802) 828-2431

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
Implementation costs of vegetated buffers and rental payments for maintained buffers on Vermont agricultural land
Ben Gabos
Ben.Gabos@Vermont.gov
(802) 461-3814

Phil Wilson
Phillip.Wilson@vermont.gov
(802) 505-5378

April
Dairy Marketing and Branding Services Grant
Grants for value-added dairy processors to access professional services to implement marketing tactics, brand improvements, and overall strategy
Kathryn Donovan
Kathryn.Donovan@vermont.gov
(802) 585-4571

Local Food In Your Community Program
Grants for implementation of improvements for local food markets to increase access to and demand for specialty crops.
Alissa Matthews
Alissa.Matthews@vermont.gov
(802) 505-1661

May
Field Agronomic Practices (FAP) Program
Per-acre payments for conservation practices on

Vermont farms and support for one-time water quality educational events or trainings
Nina Gage
Nina.Gage@vermont.gov
(802) 622-4098

June
Goat & Sheep Dairy Supply Chain Impact Grant
Grants for projects that address supply chain challenges for existing goat and sheep dairy businesses
Kathryn Donovan

Kathryn.Donovan@vermont.gov
(802) 585-4571

August
Dairy Food Safety Certification Grant
Grant funding to support food safety improvements including technical assistance, audits, plan writing, and infrastructure upgrades
Kathryn Donovan
Kathryn.Donovan@vermont.gov
(802) 585-4571

Apply by April 23 for USDA-NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program

By Amy Overstreet,
Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Agricultural producers wanting to enhance current conservation efforts are encouraged to apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). While applications for CSP are accepted year-round, applications must

be received by April 23, 2021, to be considered for this funding period.


Through CSP, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps private landowners build their business while implementing conservation practices that help ensure the sustainability of their entire operation. In FY 2020, Vermont NRCS

allocated nearly \$650,000 to private landowners through CSP.

CSP provides many benefits, including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements, and increased resilience to adverse weather.

Contact your local NRCS office to learn more.





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Governor Phil Scott taps the first maple of the 2021 maple season at Templeton Farm in East Montpelier.



Governor Celebrates 2021 Maple Season at Templeton Farm with Annual Tree-Tapping

By Scott Waterman, VT
Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

As the 2021 maple season began to unthaw, Vermont Governor Phil Scott joined the owners of Templeton Farm in East Montpelier to recognize and celebrate Vermont's maple industry. The annual first tree-tapping recognizes the start of the maple season with a ceremonial tree tap by the Governor, while also recognizing the cultural and economic importance of the tradition and agricultural crop.

"With our state's maple producer's leadership and example, maple continues to be an incredibly important and valuable agricultural product and element of Vermont's culture, economy and brand," Governor Scott said.

The Templeton Farm in East Montpelier has operated a maple syrup business since 1810. Eight generations of the Chapell Family have run a variety of agriculture

businesses including maple and beef. Bruce Chapell and sons Ryan and Seth Chapell currently operate the family business.

"In 2020, nearly 2 million gallons were produced with \$54 million in sales, making maple the second

largest agricultural crop in Vermont behind milk and highlighting the importance of this industry to our state," Agriculture Secretary Anson Tebbetts said.

Visit the Vermont Sugar Makers Association to find a maple producer near you.

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